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ABSTRACT

The Parent and Child Education Program (PACE) is a pilot program, developed in Kentucky, to provide adult, early childhood and parent education. PACE targets families that have one or both parents without a high school diploma or equivalency certificate and one child three or four years of age. Parents and children ride the bus to school together, three days a week. During the day parents attend adult education classes, and their preschool children attend an early childhood education program. Parents also participate in a parent education program that includes direct interaction with their children. Initial and partial assessment of the program showed that 49% of participants earned their GED, but a number of others were waiting for test results. Thirty-six percent of participants reported changes in their communications with school officials. All of the mothers reported they thought their children were ready to go to kindergarten, largely because of skills the children had learned in the PACE program. Parents also perceived that they had both the power and the tools to teach their children necessary skills. While preliminary results look good, a more comprehensive research program is planned for the 1987-88 school year. (DHP)

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Parent And Child Education Program

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In 1986, the Kentucky General Assembly appropriated 1.2 million dollars for a two year pilot program. This pilot program, the Parent And Child Education (PACE) program, is an innovative union of adult education and early childhood education.

The funding of PACE was a reaction to some facts and attitudes that may or may not be unique to Kentucky, but are certainly strong barriers to educational and economic improvement in the state of Kentucky. Kentucky well exceeds the national average for unemployment (10.4%), and for children (birth - five years old) living in poverty (24.7%). Kentucky is also 50th in the nation in it's number of high school graduates and ranks #1 in white teenage pregnancies.

Fifty-one of the 120 counties in Kentucky were eligible to apply for the PACE program. These 51 counties met the criteria of having 60% or more of the adult population in the county without a high school diploma. Six districts operated PACE programs in the 1986-87 school year and this year (1987-88), eighteen PACE classrooms are in operation in twelve

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counties. The participants are Bell, Butler, Estill, Fleming, Hart, Letcher, Owsley, Magoffin, Metcalfe, Monroe and Spencer counties, and Harlan Independent.

The PACE program is targeted for families which have one or both parents without a high school diploma or high school equivalency certification, and one child that is three or four years in age. Traditionally, undereducated adults and their preschool children have been served by separate educational programs. PACE is providing an educational opportunity for two generations concurrently. By serving the family as a unit PACE hopes to help break the strong, intergenerational cycle of undereducation and poverty.

The PACE program has three main components: adult education, early childhood education, and parent education. These components are integrated into a regular school day. Parents and preschool children ride the bus to school together, three days a week. During the day parents attend adult education classes and preschool children attend an early childhood education program. The parents also participate in a parent education program that includes direct interaction with their children. The direct contact is achieved in a variety of ways such as, eating with the children, helping to supervise outdoor play activities, cooking playdough with the children, building block structures with the children, etc.

The PACE program was designed to meet the following stated goals:

1. Raise the educational level of the parents of

preschool children through instruction in basic skills.

2. Enhance parenting skills.
3. Increase developmental skills of preschool children to better prepare them for academic success.
4. Enable parents to become familiar with and comfortable in the school setting.
5. Provide a role model for the child of parental interest in education.
6. Enhance the relationship of the parent and child through planned, structured interaction.
7. Demonstrate to parents their power to affect their child's ability to learn.
8. Encourage early identification and treatment of physical or mental handicaps that may inhibit children's learning ability.
9. Encourage identification and treatment of any handicapping conditions in the adult that may inhibit their ability to care for their children.

Initial, partial assessment of the PACE program were conducted in the spring of 1987.The adult PACE participants are most likely to be White females in their mid-twenties who have been out of a formal school setting for about nine years, and have completed the eighth grade. For this presentation, the focus of the research conducted will be on the following three measurable objectives.

1. Seventy percent of the parents in the program will

successfully complete the GED Test and/or raise skill levels on TABE by two grade levels and/or enroll in further educational or job training programs.

2. Fifty percent of the parents in the program will complete at least one planned cycle of the program.

3. Improve parent's willingness to communicate with school personnel and other appropriate social service agencies as measured by frequency of contact.

During the academic year 1986-87, 48.86% of the PACE participants earned their GED by the beginning of May, 1987. However, at the time of the data collection, 20 PACE participants were waiting for their GED test results and some of the participants were planning to take the June, 1987 GED examination. At the time of this study, pre and post TABE scores of the participants were not available. In general the PACE participants stayed 8 months in the program.

Although 36% of the participants reported changes in their communications with school personnel, it is difficult to make an accurate judgement on this, due to the lack of pre-program assessments. However, participants did not indicate that they had contacted other social service agencies.

All of the mothers (100%) reported that they thought their child was ready to go to kindergarten. The reasons they listed fell into two categories, social skills and cognitive skills. The mothers reported that skills needed for their child to be ready for kindergarten were some of the

same skills that their child had learned in the PACE program, such as easy separation from parent, getting along well with other children, sharing, knowing numbers and colors. These results speak to the goal of the PACE program to increase developmental skills for preschool children to better prepare them for academic success. In the parent's perception, the PACE program did increase the developmental skills of these preschool children. Additionally these parents think their children learned skills that will help them be successful in kindergarten.

Parents also perceived that they not only had the power, but the tools to teach their child(ren) necessary skills. These skills also were listed when asked what the PACE program was teaching their child(ren). This may indicate that the parents feel a partnership with the teachers in their child's learning.

While preliminary results appear to be positive, a more comprehensive research program is being implemented for the 1987-88 school year.